Bakersfield Gold

BUCK OWENS

AND THE BUCKAROOS

Top 10 hits 1959-1974

1. UNDER YOUR SPELL AGAIN
2. ABOVE AND BEYOND
3. EXCUSE ME (I THINK I'VE GOT A HEARTACHE)
4. FOOLIN' AROUND
5. LOOSE TALK – Buck Owens & Rose Maddox
6. MENTAL CRUELTY – Buck Owens & Rose Maddox
7. UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LOVE
8. KICKIN' OUR HEARTS AROUND
9. YOU'RE FOR ME
10. ACT NATURALLY
11. LOVE'S GONNA LIVE HERE
12. MY HEART SKIPS A BEAT
13. TOGETHER AGAIN
14. I DON'T CARE (JUST AS LONG AS YOU LOVE ME)
15. I'VE GOT A TIGER BY THE TAIL
16. BEFORE YOU GO
17. ONLY YOU (CAN BREAK MY HEART)
18. GONNA HAVE LOVE
19. BUCKAROO
20. WAITIN' IN YOUR WELFARE LINE
21. THINK OF ME
22. OPEN UP YOUR HEART
23. WHERE DOES THE GOOD TIMES GO
24. SAM'S PLACE
25. YOUR TENDER LOVING CARE
26. IT TAKES PEOPLE LIKE YOU (TO MAKE PEOPLE LIKE ME)
27. HOW LONG WILL MY BABY BE GONE
28. SWEET ROSIE JONES
29. LET THE WORLD KEEP ON A TURNIN' – Buck Owens & Buddy Alan
30. I'VE GOT YOU ON MY MIND AGAIN
31. WHO'S GONNA MOW YOUR GRASS
32. JOHNNY B. GOODE
33. TALL DARK STRANGER
34. BIG IN VEGAS
35. THE KANSAS CITY SONG
36. THE GREAT WHITE HORSE – Buck Owens & Susan Raye
37. I WOULDN'T LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY (IF THEY GAVE ME THE WHOLE DANG TOWN)
38. BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER*
39. RUBY (ARE YOU MAD)*
40. ROLLIN' IN MY SWEET BABY'S ARMS*
41. I'LL STILL BE WAITING FOR YOU*
42. MADE IN JAPAN*
43. BIG GAME HUNTER*
44. ON THE COVER OF THE MUSIC CITY NEWS*
45. (IT'S A) MONSTERS' HOLIDAY*
46. GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

ORIGINAL RECORDINGS PRODUCED BY KEN NELSON, EXCEPT * PRODUCED AT BUCK OWENS STUDIOS, BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA
COMPILATION PRODUCED FOR RELEASE BY CHERYL PAWELSKI

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Photo courtesy of the Ronnie Barnett Collection

Photo courtesy of Ronnie Jackson

Top left, left–right: Doyle Holly, Willie Cantu, Buck, Don Rich, Tom Brumley. *Top right:* Buck and Susan Raye. *MIddle right:* Don Rich and Buck. *Bottom right, left–right:* Ronnie Jackson, Doyle Curtsinger, Buck, Jerry Wiggins, Don Rich, and Jim Shaw. *Bottom middle:* Rose Maddox and Buck. *Bottom left:* Buck recording the vocals to "I Wouldn't Live In New York City (If They Gave Me The Whole Dang Town)" on the streets of New York.

Buck Owens – vocals/guitar

THE BUCKAROOS

Don Rich
Fiddle (2–3, 5–9, 40, 42, 46), *Guitar* (13, 22, 35–41, 46), *Lead guitar* (10–12, 14–21, 23–30, 32–34, 42–45), *fuzztone guitar* (31), *Harmony vocals* (21, 28, 32, 38–41, 44, 46)

Wayne Wilson
Guitar (25–26)

Kenny Pierce
Bass (10)

Doyle Holly
Bass (12–13, 27, 32, 34), *guitar* (14–24, 28–29, 30–31, 33, 35–36)

Doyle Curtsinger
Bass (35–46), *harmony vocals* (38–41, 44, 46)

Jay McDonald
Steel guitar (10–11)

Tom Brumley
Steel guitar (12–31, 33)

Jay Dee Maness
Steel guitar (32, 34)

Jerry Brightman
Steel guitar (41, 43, 45–46), *Dobro* (44)

Jim Shaw
Piano (37–41, 44), *organ* (38), *Farfisa organ* (42), *keyboards* (43, 45–46), *Mellotron* (46), *harmonica* (37), *harmony vocals* (44), *laughs* (45)

Ronnie Jackson
Banjo (39–40), *guitar* (42–46)

Moose Stone
Drums (7–9)

Ken Presley
Drums (10)

Mel King
Drums (11)

Willie Cantu
Drums (14–27)

Jerry Wiggins
Drums (28–46)

ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS

Jelly Sanders *fiddle* (1, 4), *guitar* (10–15, 17-18, 22–23, 26–29) • **Jim Seals** *guitar* (16) • **Red Simpson** *guitar* (19–21, 24), *electric harpsichord* (36) • **Jimmy Bryant** *guitar* (27) • **Bert Dodson** *guitar* (25), *bass* (26) • **Buddy Alan** *guitar* (30, 34), *vocals* (29), *background vocals* (34) • **Al Bruno** *guitar* (31, 33, 35) • **James Burton** *lead guitar* (22–23) • **Ralph Mooney** *steel guitar* (1–9) • **Buddy Emmons** *steel guitar* (35) • **George French Jr.** *piano* (1–6, 8–9) • **"Gentleman" Jim Pierce** *piano* (7) • **Earl Poole Ball** *piano* (29–30, 33–34), *electric harpsichord* (31), *organ* (35) • **Jeff Haskell** *Moog synthesizer* (36) • **Al Williams** *bass* (1–6) • **Bobby Austin** *bass* (7–9) • **Bob Morris** *bass* (11, 14–25, 28–29, 31, 33) • **Red Wooten** *bass* (30) • **Pee Wee Adams** *drums* (1–6) • **Mel Taylor** *drums* (12–13) • **Don Frost** *percussion* (22–23) • **Billy Sampson** *harmonica* (35) • **Rose Maddox** *vocals* (5–6) • **Susan Raye** *vocals* (36), *background vocals* (34) • **The Jordanaires with Anita Kerr** *background vocals* (30, 33) • **Jim & John Hager** *background vocals* (34) • **The Blossoms** *background vocals* (35) • poss. **LaVonne Payne** or **Joyce Hawthorne** *background vocals* (46) • **Sylvia Cariker** *screams* (45) • **Billy Armstong** *string arrangement* (34)

Original Recordings Produced by Ken Nelson except * Produced at Buck Owens Studios, Bakersfield, California

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BUCK OWENS ENTERPRISES
1225 North Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, California 93308 / Phone Area Code 805-393-1011
Enclosed, please find a new copy of my latest single. I would like your help concerning which is the A-side. A raging controversy still continues and the only way we will KNOW is if you'll help by letting us know your choice.
Please check the appropriate box (or boxes, if you're playing both sides) and add your comments. Then just return the postage paid, Airmail postcards to us.
Thanks!
Your friend,
P.S. We'll really appreciate hearing from you soon, as this is going to make it possible for us to determine the A-side.
BUCK OWENS AND HIS BUCKAROOS
Capitol RECORDS
5865
BUCK OWENS
ROLLIN' IN MY SWEET BABY'S ARMS
CORN LIKKER
FROM THE LP "BUCK OWENS' RUBY"
Capitol RECORDS
5705
Open Up Your Heart
No More Me And You
How Long Will My Ba
Be Gone
Everybody Needs Somebody
THE BUCK OWENS GOLD RECORD AWARD
Presented
IN APPRECIATION
For Your Friendship And Support Through The Years

It's fitting that this collection should focus on Buck Owens' Top Ten singles since –throughout his book *Buck 'Em! The Autobiography of Buck Owens*—the man was clearly focused on how his singles fared on the charts. Buck was, no doubt, proud of all his Top Ten hits, but sometimes seemed disappointed when one of his records didn't make it all the way to #1. It was my honor to co-write Buck's autobiography, in which his comments below first appeared.

During Buck Owens' tenure with Capitol Records (1957–1975), he scored a remarkable 46 Top Ten hits, 20 of which topped *Billboard*'s Hot Country Songs chart. But Buck was no overnight sensation. His first three singles for Capitol didn't chart at all. His fourth, "Second Fiddle," stalled at #24. For Buck Owens, the fifth time was the charm.

"**Under Your Spell Again**" was released in July of 1959 and peaked at #4 on the charts. "I'd heard this R&B song about a guy putting a spell on a woman. I decided to turn the idea around the other way—where the guy singing is the one under the woman's spell. When 'Under Your Spell Again' hit the charts, I was living up around Tacoma, Washington. After those early singles had flopped, I'd left Bakersfield and gone up there to work at a radio station, and to play in a band with a fellow named Dusty Rhodes. A few months after I moved to Washington, Dusty found a teenaged fiddle player named Donald Eugene Ulrich. Since nobody knew how to pronounce his last name right, I did him a favor and changed his name to Don Rich."

Buck's next single, "**Above And Beyond**," was released in February of 1960 and reached #3 on the charts. "Don played fiddle at that session. My old friend Harlan Howard had written 'Above And Beyond,' and my old friend Wynn Stewart had been the first to record it. I thought it was a really good song, but I had an idea of how to make a different kind of record than the one Wynn had made. 'Above And Beyond' had a great chorus, so I decided I'd kick off the song with that chorus, and then go into the first verse. I also thought the song needed to be a little more up-tempo, so I decided to speed it up some when I recorded it."

"Above And Beyond" was followed by another Harlan Howard song, this one co-written by Buck. "Harlan told

me he got the idea from something a disc jockey named 'Texas' Bill Strength had said. Harlan and Wynn Stewart had gone to visit Bill, and the three of 'em were sitting on the couch in the living room drinking beers when they saw Bill's wife start carrying stuff out of the house. She'd just walk right past 'em without saying a word. One time she was carrying a bunch of her clothes out to the car. The next time she went through, she was carrying a lamp. The next thing they knew, she was walking through the living room carrying a TV set! Finally, Bill just sighed and told Harlan and Wynn, 'Go ahead and finish your beers guys, but you'll have to excuse me—I think I've got a heartache.'"

"**Excuse Me (I Think I've Got A Heartache)**," released in August of 1960, reached #2 on the charts. Buck's last three singles having been Top Five hits, Capitol quickly sent him back into the studio. "I went down to L.A. to record four more songs at the beginning of December. Ralph Mooney played steel guitar for me, and Jelly Sanders was my fiddle player. That session included **'Foolin' Around,'** which was another one I'd written with Harlan." Released in January of 1961, "Foolin' Around" peaked on the charts at #2.

Next up for Buck was a duet with Rose Maddox. "Me and Rose went to Capitol Studios on January 16, 1961, and cut four songs—'**Loose Talk**,' '**Mental Cruelty**,' and a couple of others. Ralph Mooney played steel guitar on that session and Don Rich played fiddle. From the day we recorded those songs with Rose Maddox in January of 1961, Don played on every single record I made up to the middle of July of 1974. During all those years, he was always there with me. I had a lot of musicians come through my band and play on my records, but Don was the only person who was there for all of 'em, right up to the end of his life.

"The folks at Capitol chose to put 'Loose Talk' on one side of the single, and 'Mental Cruelty' on the other. 'Loose Talk' went to #4, and 'Mental Cruelty,' the B-side of the record, went to #8. The fans were happy because they got to buy two hits on one record!

"'**Under The Influence Of Love**' was another #2 hit for me in the fall of '61. I thought it was going to the top of the charts, but Leroy Van Dyke got in my way. His latest record hit #1 the same week my record reached #2. In fact, Leroy's 'Walk On By' turned out to be the biggest country record of 1961. It was also the biggest country record of 1962, so my record never really had a chance of reaching the top."

In early 1962, Capitol released Buck's next two singles—"Nobody's Fool But Yours" and "Save The Last Dance For Me"—both of which failed to reach the Top Ten. Owens' next two singles would fare better. "Wanda Jackson, who had been Tommy Collins's girlfriend back in the '50s, had become both a country star and a pop star by the early '60s. She had a big pop record in 1960 with 'Let's Have A Party,' but she also had country hits with songs like 'Right Or Wrong' and 'In The Middle Of A Heartache.' She was a multi-talented lady, so when she told me she'd written a song called '**Kickin' Our Hearts Around**' for me, I gave it a listen and cut it. Speaking of Tommy Collins, at that same session I also recorded a song I'd co-written with Tommy back in the mid-'50s called '**You're For Me**.'"

"Kickin' Our Hearts Around" was released in August of 1962, followed by "You're For Me" three months later, topping out at #8 and #10, respectively. And then came the single that would begin Buck's monumental streak of #1 hits.

"I don't know how many stories I've heard over the years about '**Act Naturally**' and how I came to record it. The song is credited to Johnny Russell and Voni Morrison. Johnny told me he wrote the song and then ended up sharing the writer credits with Voni because she was the one who brought the song to me.

"Voni came into my office with these acetates. Don was there with me. I listened to several of 'em and didn't hear anything that I thought would work for me. When Voni was down to her last acetate, she started to hand it to Don, but then she said, 'Oh, I'm pretty sure you won't like this one.'

"Don said, 'Well, since we're here, let's hear it.'

"When Don put the needle down, I heard that first line of 'Act Naturally,' and I said, 'That's the one.'"

Buck Owens definitely knew a hit when he heard one. "Act Naturally" shot to the top of the Hot Country Songs chart on June 15, 1963 and stayed there for four weeks. It would be his first chart-topper, and also the first of 15 #1 songs in a row.

"When folks talk about the classic lineup of The Buckaroos, they're usually talking about the band I had from January of '64 through August of '67. Of course, going back to the beginning, there was always Don on fiddle and guitar. The next member of that classic lineup to join was Doyle Holly. Doyle came on board in August of '63 on bass guitar. A month after Doyle joined The Buckaroos, '**Love's Gonna Live Here**' came out. I'd been nervous about the song ever since I'd recorded it because I knew I needed to keep the momentum going since 'Act Naturally' had been such a big hit.

"Turns out I didn't have anything to worry about because 'Love's Gonna Live Here' ended up being the biggest hit single I ever had. Nowadays, I doubt if most people think of 'Love's Gonna Live Here' as being as big as something like 'Act Naturally' or some of my other #1 records—but that thing was #1 for 16 weeks in a row!"

Buck's next single—"**My Heart Skips A Beat**" b/w "**Together Again**"—resulted in a two-sided smash. "On January 28, 1964, I went back into the studio. Two of the songs we cut at that session with [Ventures drummer] Mel Taylor were ones I'd written—'My Heart Skips A Beat' and 'Together Again.' If you're familiar with some of those hits by The Ventures, then you know what a showman Mel was on the drums. Since I had him playing for me that day, I got him to do this flashy little drum thing on the chorus of 'My Heart Skips A Beat' that ended up making the song sound pretty unique—especially for a country record.

"Of all the songs I've written, 'Together Again' is the one that's probably been recorded the most. The funny thing about 'Together Again' is that it's actually a happy song, but since the melody is kind of mournful sounding, most people think it's really sad. That's because they haven't listened to the lyrics.

"'My Heart Skips A Beat' was #1 for three weeks. And then, when I opened *Billboard* the next week to see how my record was doing, I couldn't believe my eyes. 'My Heart Skips A Beat' had dropped to #2, and 'Together Again' was the new #1 hit. I'd had my #1 record knocked off the top of the charts by the other side of my own record!"

In a feat that had never happened before (and has never happened since), the two songs would trade places with each other yet again. After "Together Again" sat atop the charts for two weeks, it was replaced by "My Heart Skips A Beat," which returned to #1 for another four weeks.

As disk jockeys used to say, the hits would just keep on coming. "The single, '**I Don't Care (Just As Long As You Love Me)**' came out in August of '64, and the album, *I Don't Care*, came out in November. When the album came out, the single was sitting at the top of the charts, where it stayed for six weeks. Then the album went to the top of the country album charts, so I was starting to think things couldn't get much better that year. Turns out I was wrong."

While on tour with Harlan Howard's wife, singer Jan Howard, Buck was sitting in the front seat of Jan and Howard's Cadillac, with Jan at the wheel and Howard sitting in the back. "Jan went driving by one of those old Esso gas stations. There was a big sign out front that had a cartoon of a tiger on it, and the Esso slogan in big letters. It said, 'Put a Tiger in Your Tank.' So, I looked back at Harlan and said, 'How about "**I've Got A Tiger By The Tail**" for a title?' And that's all it took. Harlan sat back there, scribbled away for maybe five or ten minutes, and then he just threw the piece of paper into the front seat between me and Jan. I picked it up, read the lyrics, started singing the melody that came into my head, and the song was done." The resulting single was Buck's first #1 hit of 1965, where it stayed for five weeks. For his next release, Buck decided to shift gears.

"Except for a few ballads we'd hit the charts with—like 'Under The Influence Of Love' and 'Together Again'—just about everything else we'd done that had become big hits for us were up-tempo songs. 'Act Naturally' and 'Love's Gonna Live Here' and 'My Heart Skips A Beat'—they all had that beat to 'em that my fans had come to expect from me. Well, on '**Before You Go**,' the opening verse was up-tempo, but when we got to the chorus, everything stopped—and then the song turned into a slow ballad on the chorus. Then it would kick back into that fast up-tempo beat again on the next verse—and then back to a ballad on the chorus again.

"I knew it was a hell of a gamble. It was the kind of thing that people might love because it was so different—or they might hate it for the same reason. But I didn't want to reach the point where people would start accusing me of just recording what sounded like the same song all the time with different lyrics, so I decided to really shake things up a bit and see what would happen."

As usual, Buck's instincts were right. "Before You Go" was #1 for six weeks. While it was still on the charts, Capitol put out Owens' next single. "'**Only You (Can Break My Heart)**' was one of those ballad songs, and I was real happy with the way it came out when we recorded it. In October of '65, the single finally made it to #1. It had come out way back in July, so that one really took it's time to reach the top, but it did—making it my eighth #1 single in a row."

The B-side, "**Gonna Have Love**," also hit the charts, topping out at #10 and giving Owens another two-sided hit. Since the A-side went to #1, Buck contended (and so shall we) that his stretch of #1 singles didn't come to a halt when the B-side also failed to reach #1.

The Instrumental Hits Of Buck Owens And His Buckaroos—including the track "**Buckaroo**"—was released in July of 1965. "When Capitol put out 'Buckaroo' as my next single in October, I figured my streak of chart-topping singles was finally going to come to an end. But when I looked at the country singles chart in the final issue of *Billboard* for 1965, 'Buckaroo' was sitting at the very top. So, the impossible had happened. My fans had made my one instrumental single a #1 hit. A few years later, Ralph Emery told me that 'Buckaroo' was the first instrumental to ever go to #1 on the country charts. Last time I checked, it was also the *last* instrumental to go to #1 on the country charts."

Around the same time Buck and The Buckaroos' all-instrumental album was released, Owens received a tape of songs written by Nat Stuckey. "One of the songs on there was just a couple of lines. It was like Nat had come up with a good idea for a song, but he hadn't finished it. Either that, or he'd written the shortest song you ever heard. This little thing he'd written was about a guy who had the 'hongries' for this woman's love, so he was waitin' in her welfare line. Don and I got a big kick out of that line, so we sat down and wrote some verses to go with it, and we made the part that was on Nat's tape the chorus of the song. We got the co-writer credits worked out with Nat, and then we went in the studio and cut it in August of '65." Released as a single at the beginning of 1966, "**Waitin' In Your Welfare Line**" hit the top of the charts on February 19 and remained at #1 for seven weeks.

Buck's second single of 1966, "**Think Of Me**," arrived in early May. "'Think of Me' was the first song Don co-wrote with somebody besides me that turned out to be the A-side of one of my singles. It wasn't one of those fast 'freight train' songs like we'd done so many of by then, but it wasn't a slow ballad like 'Together Again' either. As far as the tempo is concerned, it sort of fell between the two—but the result was the same because it went to #1 in July of '66 and stayed up there for six weeks."

While "Think Of Me" was still at the top of the charts, Capitol released Buck's next single, "**Open Up Your Heart**." "For that one I'd brought in the great James 'Chicken-Pickin'' Burton to play lead guitar. James had been Ricky Nelson's guitar player since the late '50s, and just a few years later he'd be Elvis's guitar player. But for one day he was my guitar player, and I loved what he did on 'Open Up Your Heart.'"

In October, "Open Up Your Heart" went the same place Buck's previous eleven singles had gone—straight to the top. And so did the next one.

"'**Where Does the Good Times Go**' went to #1 on *Billboard*'s country singles chart in February of '67. What do you do when you've had 13 #1 hits in a row? Well, I looked around, but there wasn't a soul to ask because nobody'd ever done that before. Other country stars would've probably just bought another Cadillac or something. I bought another radio station. In fact, I bought two."

Having reached record-breaking territory, Buck kept recording and Capitol kept pumping out 45s. "On March 13, 1967, my single of '**Sam's Place**' was released. Me and Red Simpson had written that one. We got the title from the name of a club I used to play in Northern California. At first I thought it was just like every other joint we'd played on tour up there—until the owner got so loaded that he tried to drive his car through the front door of his own honky-tonk. Well, he might've just been trying to park

near the entrance, but he ended up almost getting his Cadillac all the way through the front door. I never knew for sure what his intentions were, but we played the gig anyway—even though it was pretty drafty that night since the entrance to the club was a little wider than it had been when we got there."

"Sam's Place" spent three weeks at #1 that May. A month later, out came the next one: "When '**Your Tender Loving Care**' went to the top of the charts, that made 15 #1 hit singles in a row. I'd become successful beyond anything I'd ever imagined. I was 38 years old and had finally begun to stop worrying about being poor again. Well, that's not quite true. When you've been as poor as I was growing up, you never really stop worrying about being poor again—but I was able to relax enough to accept the fact that we could afford to start flying to our shows instead of going everywhere in the tour bus."

And with his next single, Buck's amazing stretch of consecutive #1 hits came to an end. "In early June of '67 we were back in the studio. Don and I had spent a lot of our time on the road writing songs, so we cut several of 'em over those three days. On the third day we did one of mine called '**It Takes People Like You (To Make People Like Me)**.' That was what I always said to our audiences at the end of all our shows. I wrote that one as a tribute to my fans, but it only reached #2 on the charts. Now, I know that might sound silly—especially since some country stars go their whole careers without ever having a #1 record—but I was just the opposite. I'd come to expect my records to top the charts."

In January of 1968, the album *It Takes People Like You To Make People Like Me* and the single "**How Long Will My Baby Be Gone**" were released. "Capitol put out my second album of the year on April 1. In fact, it was my second greatest hits record, *The Best Of Buck Owens Vol. 2*. Less than a week later I was able to breathe a big sigh of relief when 'How Long Will My Baby Be Gone' hit the top of the country singles chart. It only stayed #1 for a week, but it was a week longer than my previous single had."

For Buck's next single, Capitol decided to try a new promotional angle—a music video. "They brought in this Emmy-winning director who'd heard my song, '**Sweet Rosie Jones**,' and wanted to create a little movie where the whole song would be acted out. 'Sweet Rosie Jones' is about a guy who meets Rosie down by the river and falls in love with her. Then one day a tall, dark stranger comes to take her away, so she writes a letter to the guy who's in love with her, telling him she's leaving him for the tall, dark stranger. At the end of the song, the guy says he's going to jump in the river and drown because he can't live without Rosie.

"This director literally used the song for his script. He filmed me and the girl who played Rosie standing down by the river. Then he filmed the tall, dark stranger riding in on his horse. Then he filmed Rosie writing the letter saying she was leaving. Well, about that time, I was starting to get a little nervous because I was thinking he was going to say, 'OK, Buck. Now in this next scene you jump in the river and look like you're drowning.' But it turned out he just filmed this white cowboy hat floating down the river, so I was happy I didn't have to get my clothes wet for the sake of high art."

In August of 1967, Buck went into the studio with his son, Buddy. Their single was released in July of the following year. "Our duet of '**Let The World Keep On A-Turnin'**' reached #7 in September of '68. I've always looked at duets a lot differently than I do my solo records. What I mean is, I didn't expect the duets I recorded to be huge hits because—at least back in the '60s—a #1 duet record was a very rare thing. Johnny Cash and June Carter never even had one of theirs hit the top of the charts. And if those two didn't have any, nobody should have!"

There would be more duets in Buck's future, but his next release was back to Buck and The Buckaroos, with special guest Earl Poole Ball on piano. "I decided to go in a different direction for '**I've Got You On My Mind Again**.' This one was a ballad, but instead of putting the focus on Tom Brumley's steel guitar the way we'd done on other ballads like 'Together Again,' we went with a piano introduction, and we kept the piano pretty far up in the mix the whole song." The single—which also included background vocals by the Anita Kerr Singers and The Jordanaires—was a hit by anyone else's standards, but Buck was disappointed when it topped out at #5.

Although going in a different direction didn't result in the success Buck had hoped for, with his next single he decided to shake things up even more dramatically. "Don Rich had gotten himself a fuzz box. A lot of the rock 'n' roll guys had been using fuzz boxes for a while by then—like Keith Richards on '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction.' Blues guys and rock guys used 'em, but I don't know if any country guys had used one yet. If they had, they sure hadn't had a hit single with it. So, [record producer] Ken Nelson was pretty unhappy when Don flipped that switch, turned his amp up, and played the intro to a song I'd written called '**Who's Gonna Mow Your Grass**.'" As it turned out, Ken Nelson needn't have been concerned. "Who's Gonna Mow Your Grass" became Buck's 17th #1 in March of 1969.

Owens had already recorded two successful live albums—*Carnegie Hall Concert* and *Buck Owens And His Buckaroos In Japan*—when Capitol released *Buck Owens in London* in June of 1969. Unlike the other two albums, this one included a single. "We closed the show at the Palladium with '**Johnny B. Goode**.' Now, I've got to tell you, Don really outdid himself on that one. I've heard a lot of instrumental guitar breaks on a lot of records in my lifetime—I'm talking about thousands of 'em—and I've never heard a better one before or since than what Don Rich played on 'Johnny B. Goode' that night." Buck's fans clearly appreciated Don's playing as well, taking the single to #1 in July of 1969.

"My mother's mother used to tell me to 'always beware of tall, dark strangers. That saying just kind of stuck with me over the years, so when I wrote the song 'Sweet Rosie Jones,' I had a tall, dark stranger come and steal her away. I liked the image of that mysterious character so much I went back to him again when I wrote '**Tall Dark Stranger**.'"

"Tall Dark Stranger" would become Buck's third #1 hit in a row—but it would be several years before another one of his singles would do as well.

"'**Big In Vegas**' actually started out as 'Big In Dallas.' 'Big In Dallas' was written by a guy named Terry Stafford. Terry was a recording artist in the '60s. He had a big hit called 'Suspicion' in '64, and about a decade later he'd

co-write a song called ‘Amarillo By Morning’ that would become a huge hit for George Strait. Well, ‘Big In Dallas’ didn’t become a big hit for anybody. But when I heard the song, I knew it had potential, so I went to Terry and asked him if I could do a little re-writing, including changing the location from Dallas to Vegas, and he said it was fine with him.”

The single made it to #5 on the charts, and then it was on from Vegas to Kansas City. “‘**The Kansas City Song**’ was released in May of ’70. *Billboard* raved about the single, saying ‘It’s sure to keep him at the top of the country charts.’ It came close, reaching #2 for a couple of weeks, which was a little better than ‘Big In Vegas’ had done.”

Also in 1970, Buck had released two duet singles with Susan Raye, neither of which reached the Top Ten. “I’d met Susan Raye at a club up in Portland, Oregon the night before her son was born. As you can imagine, she was very pregnant, but she got up and sang that night, and I liked her singing a lot. ‘**The Great White Horse**’ became the biggest hit we’d have together. It reached #8 on the country singles chart.”

Meanwhile, on his solo singles, Buck was still singing about U.S. cities. A trip to Manhattan was the inspiration for his last release of 1970. “I told Don, ‘I wouldn’t live here if they gave me the whole damn town.’ And as soon as I said it, I knew I had a song to write. So, I wrote ‘**I Wouldn’t Live In New York City (If They Gave Me The Whole Damn Town)**.’ At least that was the original title. The folks at Capitol said country radio wouldn’t play a song with the word ‘damn’ in it—especially one with ‘damn’ right there in the title—so they begged me to change it to something else. That’s how it became ‘I Wouldn’t Live In New York City (If They Gave Me the Whole *Dang* Town).’”

In yet another gear-shifting career move, Buck’s next single was written by Paul Simon. “When ‘**Bridge Over Troubled Water**’ came out in February of ’71, radio jumped on it right away. And then out came this publication called ‘The Mindszenty Report.’ On the front page was a piece called ‘Rock And Revolution.’ The article started by quoting the first ten lines of ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water.’ Then the writer said that two words in the song—‘silver girl’—were about a hypodermic needle filled with heroin. One week my record was sitting at #9, and the next week it started flying down the charts so fast, it was like the thing had an anchor tied to it. They say heroin kills. Well, it sure killed my single.”

Choosing not to record more songs that might have hidden meanings, Buck made yet another musical leap. To everyone’s surprise, including his own band, Buck decided it was time for some modernized bluegrass. “I knew I was probably going to upset everybody from the casual bluegrass fan to Bill Monroe himself with what we were about to do, but I did it anyway. Me and my latest lineup of Buckaroos went into my studio and cut ten tunes in our own ‘Buckaroo Bluegrass’ style. In April of ’71 we put out our first bluegrass single, ‘**Ruby (Are You Mad)**,’ and it shot all the way up to #3 on the country charts.”

To everyone’s surprise (perhaps even Buck’s), his “Buckaroo Bluegrass” was a roaring success. “My bluegrass album, we called it *Ruby And Other Bluegrass Specials*, went to #9 on the country albums chart—my highest-charting album in a couple of years. And unlike my last several albums, we released a second single from it. ‘**Rollin’ In My Sweet Baby’s Arms**’ came out in August and ended up being an even bigger hit than ‘Ruby (Are You Mad).’ It hit #2 for a couple of weeks, but that’s as high as it went because Lynn Anderson’s ‘How Can I Unlove You’ just wouldn’t fall out of that top spot.”

Bluegrass had been an interesting change of pace, but after one album and two singles, Buck went back to recording straight country again. “Even though I didn’t have enough songs cut for a new album, I’d written a ballad called ‘**I’ll Still Be Waiting For You**’ that I felt really good about. The recording featured some beautiful piano playing by Jim Shaw, and it also had the latest Buckaroo on it—my new steel guitar player, Jerry Brightman. The single came out in January of ’72 and ended up reaching #8.

“It had been so long since I’d had a #1 hit, I’d begun to think there just weren’t going to be any more until I heard a song Bob Morris and his wife Faye had written called ‘**Made In Japan**.’ We went in the studio and cut it, with Jim playing Farfisa organ and Don overdubbing his fiddle parts to give the whole arrangement a Far East kind of sound. The single came out in April. Two months later, on April 15, ‘Made In Japan’ hit the top of the country charts.”

“Made In Japan” would become Buck’s 12th and final #1 record on Capitol.

“In 1973, for the first time in 14 years, none of my singles even reached the Top Ten. So, I switched gears again. If I couldn’t make ’em cry with my sad songs, I’d make ’em laugh with my funny ones. I started by writing and recording ‘**Big Game Hunter**’—a song about a guy who won’t do any work around the house that his wife wants him to because he’s too busy looking for football games on TV. The single came out at the end of ’73 and reached #8 early the next year.”

Finally back in the Top Ten—and now a household name thanks to the hit “rural comedy” TV show *Hee Haw*—Buck decided to stick with humor. “One day I heard this really funny song on the radio that was a big pop hit for a group called Dr. Hook And The Medicine Show. Hell, even the name of the band was funny. The song was called ‘The Cover Of The *Rolling Stone*,’ and it was written by a guy named Shel Silverstein. I called Shel and asked him if I could re-write the song and he said, ‘Sure.’ Then I called Jim Shaw and told him we were going to work on the new lyrics together. What we ended up with was ‘**On The Cover Of The *Music City News***.’”

Released in March of 1974, the single made it to #9 on *Billboard*’s Hot Country Songs chart. And then, just as his next “funny one” came out, tragedy struck, changing Buck’s life and career forever. On July 17, 1974, Don Rich—Buck’s musical partner and best friend—was killed in a motorcycle accident.

“Just before Don Rich died, Capitol had released my next single—‘**(It’s A) Monsters’ Holiday**.’ It was terrible timing. First of all, it was nowhere near Halloween—and secondly, I sure didn’t feel like laughing. But it became a Top Ten hit, and so did the next one. ‘**Great Expectations**’ came out in November and made it to #8 on the charts in February of ’75. It was the last single that had Don Rich on it, and it was the last Top Ten hit of my career on Capitol Records.”

—Randy Poe
January 2022

1. **UNDER YOUR SPELL AGAIN**
(Buck Owens/Dusty Rhodes)
Capitol 4245A (Jul. 13, 1959) • Peak Chart Position: #4

2. **ABOVE AND BEYOND**
(Harlan Howard)
Capitol 4337A (Feb. 1, 1960) • Peak Chart Position: #3

3. **EXCUSE ME (I THINK I'VE GOT A HEARTACHE)**
(Harlan Howard/Buck Owens)
Capitol 4412A (Aug. 1, 1960) • Peak Chart Position: #2

4. **FOOLIN' AROUND**
(Buck Owens/Harlan Howard)
Capitol 4496A (Jan. 2, 1961) • Peak Chart Position: #2

5. **LOOSE TALK**
– Buck Owens & Rose Maddox
(Freddie Hart/Ann Lucas)
Capitol 4550A (Apr. 10, 1961) • Peak Chart Position: #4

6. **MENTAL CRUELTY**
– Buck Owens & Rose Maddox
(Larry Davis/Dixie Davis/Buck Owens)
Capitol 4550B (Apr. 10, 1961) • Peak Chart Position: #8

7. **UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LOVE**
(Buck Owens/Harlan Howard)
Capitol 4602A (Jul. 24, 1961) • Peak Chart Position: #2

8. **KICKIN' OUR HEARRTS AROUND**
(Wanda Jackson)
Capitol 4826A (Aug. 20, 1962) • Peak Chart Position: #8

9. **YOU'RE FOR ME**
(Buck Owens/Tommy Collins)
Capitol 4872A (Nov. 5, 1962) • Peak Chart Position: #10

10. **ACT NATURALLY**
(John Russell/Voni Morrison)
Capitol 4937A (Mar. 11, 1963) • Peak Chart Position: #1

11. **LOVE'S GONNA LIVE HERE**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5025A (Aug. 19, 1963) • Peak Chart Position: #1

12. **MY HEART SKIPS A BEAT**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5136A (Feb. 24, 1962) • Peak Chart Position: #1

13. **TOGETHER AGAIN**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5136B (Feb. 24, 1962) • Peak Chart Position: #1

14. **I DON'T CARE (JUST AS LONG AS YOU LOVE ME)**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5240A (Aug. 3, 1964) • Peak Chart Position: #1

15. **I'VE GOT A TIGER BY THE TAIL**
(Buck Owens/Harlan Howard)
Capitol 5336A (Dec. 28, 1964) • Peak Chart Position: #1

16. **BEFORE YOU GO**
(Don Rich/Buck Owens)
Capitol 5410A (Apr. 19, 1965) • Peak Chart Position: #1

17. **ONLY YOU (CAN BREAK MY HEART)**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5465A (Jul. 5, 1965) • Peak Chart Position: #1

18. **GONNA HAVE LOVE**
(Red Simpson/Buck Owens)
Capitol 5465B (Jul. 5, 1965) • Peak Chart Position: #10

19. **BUCKAROO**
(Bob Morris)
Capitol 5517A (Oct. 11, 1965) • Peak Chart Position: #1

20. **WAITIN' IN YOUR WELFARE LINE**
(Buck Owens/Don Rich/Nat Stuckey)
Capitol 5566A (Jan. 3, 1966) • Peak Chart Position: #1

21. **THINK OF ME**
(Don Rich/Estrella Olson)
Capitol 5647A (May 2, 1966) • Peak Chart Position: #1

22. **OPEN UP YOUR HEART**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5705A (Aug. 15, 1966) • Peak Chart Position: #1

23. **WHERE DOES THE GOOD TIMES GO**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5811A (Dec. 26, 1966) • Peak Chart Position: #1

24. **SAM'S PLACE**
(Buck Owens/Red Simpson)
Capitol 5865A (Mar. 13, 1967) • Peak Chart Position: #1

25. **YOUR TENDER LOVING CARE**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 5942A (Jun. 26, 1967) • Peak Chart Position: #1

26. **IT TAKES PEOPLE LIKE YOU (TO MAKE PEOPLE LIKE ME)**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2001A (Sep. 25, 1967) • Peak Chart Position: #2

27. **HOW LONG WILL MY BABY BE GONE**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2080A (Jan. 8, 1968) • Peak Chart Position: #1

28. **SWEET ROSIE JONES**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2142A (Apr. 1, 1968) • Peak Chart Position: #2

29. **LET THE WORLD KEEP ON A TURNIN'**
– Buck Owens & Buddy Alan
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2237A (Jul. 8, 1968) • Peak Chart Position: #7

30. **I'VE GOT YOU ON MY MIND AGAIN**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2300A (Sep. 30, 1968) • Peak Chart Position: #5

31. **WHO'S GONNA MOW YOUR GRASS**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2377A (Jan. 13, 1969) • Peak Chart Position: #1

32. **JOHNNY B. GOODE**
(Chuck Berry)
Capitol 2485A (May 5, 1969) • Peak Chart Position: #1

33. **TALL DARK STRANGER**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2570A (Jul. 21, 1969) • Peak Chart Position: #1

34. **BIG IN VEGAS**
(Buck Owens/Terry Stafford)
Capitol 2646A (Oct. 20, 1969) • Peak Chart Position: #5

35. **THE KANSAS CITY SONG**
(Buck Owens/Red Simpson)
Capitol 2783A (May 18, 1970) • Peak Chart Position: #2

36. **THE GREAT WHITE HORSE**
– Buck Owens & Susan Raye
(Buck Owens/Leanne Scott)
Capitol 2871A (Jul. 27, 1970) • Peak Chart Position: #8

37. **I WOULDN'T LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY (IF THEY GAVE ME THE WHOLE DANG TOWN)**
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 2947A (Oct. 5, 1970) • Peak Chart Position: #9

38. **BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER***
(Paul Simon)
Capitol 3023A (Jan. 11, 1971) • Peak Chart Position: #9

39. **RUBY (ARE YOU MAD)***
(Cousin Emmy)
Capitol 3096A (Apr. 12, 1971) • Peak Chart Position: #3

40. **ROLLIN' IN MY SWEET BABY'S ARMS***
(Trad., arr. by Buck Owens)
Capitol 3164A (Aug. 16, 1971) • Peak Chart Position: #2

41. **I'LL STILL BE WAITING FOR YOU***
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 3262A (Jan. 17, 1972) • Peak Chart Position: #8

42. **MADE IN JAPAN***
(Bob Morris/Faye Morris)
Capitol 3314A (Apr. 3, 1972) • Peak Chart Position: #1

43. **BIG GAME HUNTER***
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 3769A (Nov. 5, 1973) • Peak Chart Position: #8

44. **ON THE COVER OF THE MUSIC CITY NEWS***
(Shel Silverstein/Buck Owens/Jim Shaw)
Capitol 3841A (Feb. 25, 1974) • Peak Chart Position: #9

45. **(IT'S A) MONSTERS' HOLIDAY***
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 3907A (Jun. 24, 1974) • Peak Chart Position: #6

46. **GREAT EXPECTATIONS***
(Buck Owens)
Capitol 3976A (Nov. 4, 1974) • Peak Chart Position: #8

SWEET ROSIE JONES
(Buck Owens)
JOHNNY B. GOODE
(Chuck Berry)
STEREO
Capitol
Arc Music Corp.
BMI-2:20
2485
(S45-72111)
Produced by:
KEN NELSON
BUCK OWENS AND THE BUCKAROOS
BIG IN VEGAS
(Buck Owens-Terry Stafford)
NOT FOR SALE
PROMOTIONAL RECORD
Blue Book Music
Evil Eye Music, Inc.
BMI
Intro.—:06
2:16
Produced at Buck Owens Studios in Bakersfield, California
IT TAKES PEOPLE LIKE YOU
(To Make People Like Me)
(Buck Owens)
Blue Book Music
BMI-2:00
2001
(45-57797)
Produced by:
Ken Nelson
BIG GAME HUNTER
(Buck Owens)
Blue Book Music-BMI
Intro.—:00
2:09
Produced at Buck Owens Studios in Bakersfield, California
BUCK OWENS
© 1973 Buck Owens Enterprises
Capitol
YOUR TENDER LOVIN
(Buck Owens)
PROMOTION RECORD
Blue Book Music
BMI—2:45
BUCK OWENS
HIS BUCKAR
P 5942
(45-56809)
GREAT EXPECTATIONS
(Buck Owens)
TALL DAR
STRANGE
(Buck Owens)
STEREO